



California Police Chiefs Association

SPOTLIGHT DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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2023 Trends in Digital Evidence

Trends and key considerations for managing evidence.

Advancements in technology have unlocked the power of digital evidence for many, but antiquated systems can slow down the investigative process. How are law enforcement agencies coping, given the rapid growth in digital evidence?

As part of Axon's ongoing research and development, we conducted a digital evidence trends survey to hear from agencies. With 919 responses, the data from this report will provide valuable insights to law enforcement agencies maturing their digital evidence strategies.

[Download the 2023 Digital Evidence Trends Report](#)

Increase in Digital Evidence

Digital evidence plays an increasingly important role in investigations. Videos, still images, audio recordings, digital tags of physical evidence, social media content, documents and other forms of digital evidence have changed the way investigators uncover the truth.

The growing amount of data from digital evidence is enormous. The 2023 Digital Evidence Trends Report found that 64% of forensic video specialists have experienced a case with over 100 video files. The report also found that video was the most frequently encountered type of digital evidence. Some investigations can include hundreds of gigabytes of information. Which leaves law enforcement wondering where to store it all. How do you find the two or three key pieces of evidence you need? How do you request and retrieve further evidence from the community? How do you effectively share evidence with other agencies or prosecutors?

With these growing demands, there are five key areas to consider for managing digital evidence in light of the trends found in the report.

Capturing Digital Evidence

The first step in an efficient digital evidence workflow is effectively recording and logging digital evidence. There are several tools and processes that officers can utilize to improve the quality of the digital evidence they capture. However, officers are not the only ones capturing digital evidence, as the public also captures video evidence. Examples include civilian cell phone video, CCTV footage, and doorbell cameras.

Storing Digital Evidence

Law enforcement must consider where to store the vast amounts of digital evidence and for how long. How will this evidence be secured? How will evidence be uploaded into the digital evidence management system (DEMS)? How will investigators access and play files that are not in standard formats? The 2023 Digital Evidence Trends Report found that approximately half of the respondents store evidence using an average of three different methods, including internal servers, USB drives, and burned on CDs/DVDs.

Managing Digital Evidence

Storing large amounts of data in a single, secure location can carry many benefits, but what happens when you need to find and manage individual pieces of evidence in a large repository?

Digital evidence management solutions should provide several ways to organize and manage data. Solutions should allow investigators to easily organize all relevant pieces of evidence in a case, from the dispatch

recordings to the body-worn camera video. This keeps all evidence in one place and makes it easier to share relevant evidence with necessary parties.

Investigating Digital Evidence

Digital evidence, like physical evidence, must be examined and investigated. The quality of an image, the frame rate of a video, the perspective of a camera and countless other factors must be considered when investigating evidence and searching for the truth about what happened.

Sharing Digital Evidence

The need to share digital evidence is also common in investigations. Perhaps officers are working with another agency and need to share what they know. The media may request access to a body-worn video recording of an incident. Often, evidence will need to be shared with prosecutors and lawyers involved in a case. Officers must ensure they are painting a clear and accurate picture of a call through digital evidence.

Increasing reliance on digital evidence means the ability to capture, store, manage, investigate, and share digital evidence is essential to modern investigations.

To learn more about the challenges and concerns that come with this growing body of digital evidence in law enforcement investigations [download the 2023 Digital Evidence Trends Report](#).

About Axon

Axon is committed to protecting truth and accelerating justice, and we develop technology that does just that. As the world of digital evidence continues to grow and evolve, our DEMS platform is designed to provide agencies with an end-to-end solution for their digital evidence. Axon Evidence is the premier DEMS for law enforcement, providing a secure, centralized, cloud-based solution for storing, managing, investigating, and sharing digital evidence. Learn more at [axon.com](https://www.axon.com).





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WHY WE CREATED FIRST RESPONDER WELLNESS WEEK

David Black

First responders are the core foundation of our communities, responsible for preserving the safety, security and civility our society is built upon. While the public outsources worst-case scenarios to these heroes every minute of every day, first responders place themselves selflessly in harm's way, time and time again.

In their service to our communities, first responders can face relentless stress, trauma and other challenges that take a heavy toll on mental and physical wellness. That's why it's so important to recognize their tremendous contributions and provide our support through initiatives such as the first-ever First Responder Wellness Week this March 27–31.

Lexipol created First Responder Wellness Week to honor and celebrate the contributions of first responders while also providing them with valuable tools and resources to help manage the stress and trauma associated with their jobs.

Tools for Trauma

One of the primary reasons we launched First Responder Wellness Week is the significant amount of stress and trauma first responders face daily. These individuals often witness and experience traumatic events on a scale that people outside of the first responder world find difficult to comprehend.

It is vital to understand that while first responders are tough and courageous, they are human and they need our support. Their selfless contributions can exact a heavy toll in the forms of heightened risk for anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, heart disease and many other negative mental and physical health outcomes. Mental health challenges, physical health morbidity, cancer risk and early death are all realities within the first responder professions. By dedicating a week to their wellness, we hope to acknowledge these struggles and provide them with the assistance to take care of their mental and physical health.

With First Responder Wellness Week, we are also dedicated to helping to smash the stigma responsible for immeasurable and unnecessary suffering amongst our nation's finest. First responders face a pervasive stigma that creates a barrier to help-seeking. Their societal roles demand strength, resilience and command presence — virtues that unfortunately often lead to a sense of isolation, helplessness and lack of support when struggling with the dark consequences of their noble work. By calling out this stigma for what it is and rejecting it wholeheartedly, we are empowered to replace it with a new cultural standard: The acknowledgment that we are all human, we all need help at times, and we must all support our first responders.

Community Appreciation

Furthermore, launching First Responder Wellness Week provides an opportunity for communities to show their strong appreciation for first responders. First responders are dedicated to service and tend not to seek out gratitude. Because of this, they are often taken for granted. We seek to correct this oversight. Those who dedicate their professional lives to keeping our communities safe must never be undervalued or overlooked. Rather, they must be honored, appreciated and respected for their essential roles, innumerable sacrifices and immeasurable value to our communities.

We depend on first responders during the worst moments of our lives. By acknowledging their essential contributions and providing resources to support their wellness, we can show our deep gratitude and appreciation for their service.

A Week of Acknowledgment

During First Responder Wellness Week, first responders will have access to resources such as mental health support, stress management techniques and physical wellness tips. Additionally, First Responder Wellness Week events will promote public involvement and collaboration, encouraging first responders and community members to work together toward the common goal of supporting those who support us.

We ask you to join us in this purpose. Because when our public safety workers are physically and mentally fit, everyone wins.



DR. DAVID BLACK is the president of wellness solutions and also serves on the Board of Directors for Lexipol, which serves more than 2 million public safety professionals in 8,100 agencies and municipalities across the United States. Dr. Black is a Board Member of the National Sheriffs' Association Psychological Services Group, serves as the Chief Psychologist of the California Police Chiefs' Association Officer Wellness Committee, serves as an Advisory Board Member for the National Policing Institute's Center for Targeted Violence Prevention, serves on the IACP Police Psychological Services Ethics Committee, and serves on the National Fraternal Order of Police Officer Wellness Committee. Dr. Black has been serving law enforcement since 2002.








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Three Trends Facing Police Chiefs in 2023

Lenny Nerbetski, Senior Law Enforcement Advisor

Modern public safety agencies exist in complex operating environments. Recruitment and retention issues mean public safety agencies have fewer officers to address complicated challenges like organized retail theft. To navigate these obstacles, departments are investing in technologies like real-time centers, which have their own hurdles.

The stakes for modern public safety organizations — keeping people, officers, and communities safe — have never been higher.

Becoming an employer of choice

Recruitment and retention “is [the number-one challenge](#) facing police departments of all sizes,” [because](#) “[t]he quality of their service delivery is directly linked to the quality of personnel they recruit, hire, and retain.”

To focus on making your department an employer of choice for people who want to serve and protect their communities, begin by truly understanding how your team works and why — and invest in tools to make their work better and easier.

From the analyst to the patrol sergeant and everyone in between, material investment in innovation that mitigates their day-to-day challenges matter. Organizations that improve upon the status quo, minimize administrative work, and help their employees focus on achieving the organization's mission will thrive.

Another major retention challenge is a lack of opportunity for advancement. Work assignment flexibility can address those concerns. Some departments have found that broadening assignments — like a patrol officer on temporary assignment with an investigative unit — can help. Their experience will give them a deeper understanding of the department today and pave the way for their future in public safety.

Rise in retail theft

While departments are grappling with staffing obstacles, sophisticated, organized criminal efforts have emerged, taxing already resource-constrained departments. In 2021, retailers [saw](#) a 26.5% increase in organized retail crime incidents. [Organized retail crimes are typically more challenging cases](#) because they are often cross jurisdictional, encompass a network of coordinated offenders deploying a range of tactics, techniques, and procedures, and intersect with a variety of data sources throughout the investigative process.

Relevant information about these crimes is extremely fragmented and finding leads amongst all these systems has traditionally been a manual process. Departments can use Peregrine to curb organized retail theft and close cases faster.

Peregrine can dynamically integrate, secure, model, and transform disparate data of any type or scale. Detectives can seamlessly access all the information they need in one place. Because Peregrine automatically links information together — like partial license plates in one system, and ALPR footage in another — investigators can find new leads with timely, precise data until they achieve the breakthrough moment to solve the case.

Fighting crime in real time

Police departments are increasingly turning to real-time crime centers (RTCCs) to combat new, complex criminal activities and act as a force multiplier for every member of their department to offset recruitment and retention challenges.

RTCCs supercharge the support departments can provide patrol officers responding to calls for service. With better initial information, officers have the context they need before they arrive. And once on site, RTCCs can provide them with real-time information as a situation evolves.

Before investing millions of taxpayer dollars in a RTCC, it's vital that departments ensure the RTCC is set up for success from staffing and technological standpoints.

An effective RTCC syncs with existing functions like dispatch so operations continue to run smoothly and is staffed appropriately to maintain a 24/7 operation. Transparently codifying process and policies to ensure training on pertinent rules and regulations is also extremely important.

Likewise, all your data in the RTCC should be fully integrated, accessible via one common operating picture with a single login. For many of our partners, an individual's record could be in a computer-aided dispatch (CAD), record management systems (RMS), warrant, and arrest databases. Four separate searches with four separate logins and then cross-referencing information from system to system is incredibly inefficient when seconds matter most.

Peregrine unlocks the speed and efficiency needed to realize the true value of a RTCC. It only takes one search to have all your information in one platform. Peregrine is vendor agnostic, integrating data from CAD and RMS systems, sensor data, LPR footage, and more — all of which can then be represented geospatially. This ensures your RTCC provides high value, curated information to your officers in the field so that they can make better, data-informed decisions and serve their community more effectively.

Law enforcement leadership is a dynamic profession requiring Chiefs to be innovative and adaptive problem solvers. Priorities and trends can change rapidly, but with the right approach and technology partners, the profession can be stronger than ever.



Digital License Plates: California Homegrown Innovation Forged in Collaboration

Neville Boston

Six years ago, the company I founded began as a pilot program with the California DMV and CHP. The goal was to test the viability of digital license plates for consumer vehicles, and I'm pleased to say that in October, Governor Newsom signed into law a bill that will make digital license plates permanently available to all 27 million drivers in California.

It's been a long journey to reach this point. We entered a deeply entrenched, heavily regulated industry with a goal to reimagine it, so it's only natural to face challenges. But we also learned lessons. It was clear early on that California is the only place where starting – and successfully finishing – this type of transformation was possible.

Our original mission in 2008 was to help modernize and digitize the vehicle registration process. Nobody was excited to wait in line at their DMV and every industry was moving towards digital transformation, so it seemed like a very natural and appropriate evolution at the time. The benefits of augmenting the DMV's analog system with a digital platform would benefit everyone – from consumers to law enforcement, and the DMV itself.

This idea eventually led us to develop a concept for a digital display license plate that could receive over-the-air remote updates and be managed via the vehicle owner's mobile app. Once we understood the effort it would take to amend state law and integrate with multiple state authorities to bring this concept to life, we quickly realized that our progress would be measured in years, not months. But what it required in patience, paid off in rich dividends of wisdom and appreciation for being a startup founded in California.

First, we learned about the power and necessity of building strong coalitions in order to bring about change. The California DMV was an eager partner from the beginning, and we couldn't have accomplished this without their support of modernizing the DMV experience. Through our collaboration with the CHP, we were able to test the operational capability and functionality of our products in real-world scenarios. We worked closely to ensure that our digital license plates would integrate seamlessly with existing systems and procedures. We were able to gather valuable feedback from law enforcement officers on the ground, which helped us to refine our product strategy. So many other coalition partners helped us get to this point, reminding me of the old proverb: if you want to go far, go together.





We discovered that bold new ideas require vision. Californians are known to be early adopters of emerging innovative technologies. We welcome new opportunities to streamline mundane tasks, express ourselves, and stay connected. Our cars are no exception, and our many partners and early customers helped us to champion this vision from the very beginning.

Throughout our journey, it also became increasingly clear that having high standards can be a benefit rather than a barrier to entry. Californians are strong advocates for consumer choice – but also strong consumer protections. As we worked to meet California’s rigorous standards for consumer product quality, data security, and user privacy, we realized it

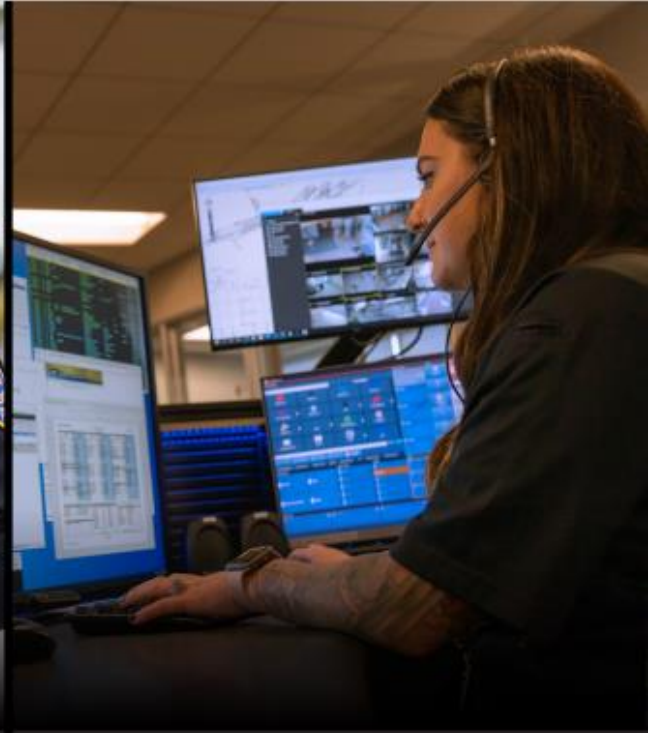
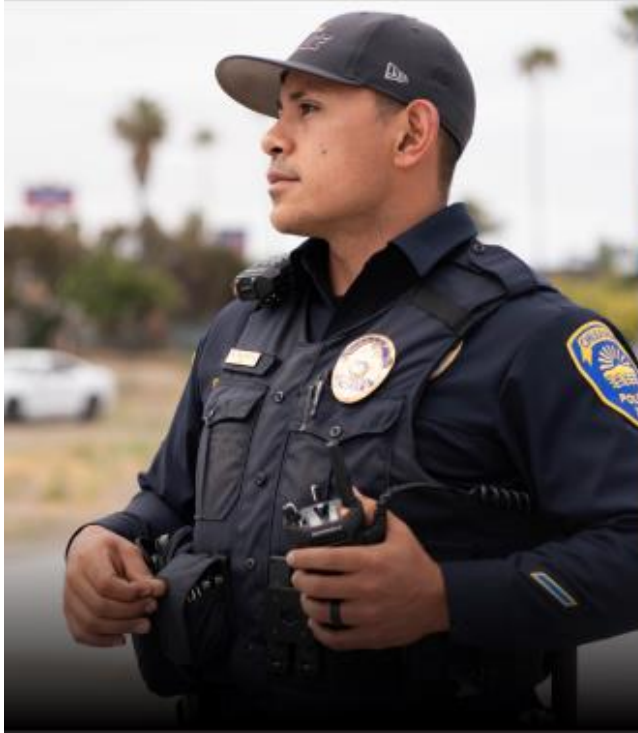
was the process that was driving us to develop a product that would meet (or exceed) standards anywhere in the world.

Lastly, throughout our journey, it became increasingly clear that there is nowhere more dynamic as an innovation hub than in California. One fifth of the patents comes from California and we are of course home to Silicon Valley, the birthplace of many fundamental technologies that define our modern world today. The best and brightest come here for our universities and the ability to create world-class companies. This is the state where entrepreneurs come to explore, develop, and thrive. I, for one, am proud to be a California Dreamer. The support I’ve received as a minority entrepreneur has been truly humbling.

Some may dismiss my words – and digital license plates in general – as trivial given the many pressing issues we’re facing as a state. But I think of this story as embodying many of California’s core values which make it a truly singular place to pursue innovative ideas: bold leadership, consumer protection, pragmatic collaboration, entrepreneurial spirit, and forever embracing the future.

Owning a vehicle just got a little more exciting for some. But the thing to be truly excited about is just how bright our future is here in the Golden State.

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Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC) is a non-profit organization that is one voice for the Alarm Industry in North America. SIAC was created to partner with law enforcement across the nation, lowering false alarm calls for service. SIAC uses the Model Alarm Ordinance with Best-Practices, which was developed in partnership with leaders from law enforcement. Since SIAC is a non-profit organization, there is never a fee to your agency for our alarm management services.



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Courageous Heart: The Human Behind the Badge

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Jones Mayer has proudly provided legal counsel to local governments and law enforcement agencies throughout California for over 40 years. As servants of those who serve our communities, the attorneys of Jones Mayer share a commitment to the values that drive public service.

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